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DEPT FOR AF/S S. HILL

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ZI](#) [SF](#)

SUBJECT: ANC SECRETARY-GENERAL DISCUSSES ZANU-PF TENSIONS

REF: HARARE 107

Classified By: Political Counselor Raymond Brown.
Reasons 1.4(b) and (d).

11. (C) African National Congress (ANC) Secretary General Kgalema Motlanthe told Embassy contact Sydney Masamvu February 9 that the South African Government opposes the extension of Mugabe's term to 2010. Motlanthe said that South Africa is encouraged by the growing split within ZANU-PF. Masamvu briefed PolOff February 9 on his conversation.

12. (C) Motlanthe, who has known Masamvu since the former journalist interviewed Motlanthe for the Zimbabwean newspaper the Financial Gazette, laid out his current thinking on the political situation in Zimbabwe.

-- Motlanthe believes that reconciling the rival Mujuru and Mnangagwa factions of ZANU-PF is the key to change in Zimbabwe. Working through ZANU-PF Chairman John Nkomo, Motlanthe said the SAG is talking to both sides with the hope of reconciling the two. If this happens, Mujuru and Mnangagwa will stop Mugabe's plan to stay in power until 12010. The challenge is finding a "compromise" leader that Mnangagwa and Mujuru could both support, although Masamvu noted that the creation of a prime ministerial post could create space for both camps. Masamvu also believes that former Finance Minister Simba Makoni, although considered a "Mujuru man," might be acceptable to Mnangagwa.

-- Motlanthe emphasized Pretoria's belief that constitutional reform is critical for Zimbabwe's future. (NOTE: This has been a consistent theme of SAG policy for several years. The SAG devoted enormous energy to the negotiating a "compromise" constitution in 2003, which was initialed by the MDC and ZANU-PF, but never implemented by Mugabe. END NOTE.) Motlanthe said that the SAG is urging ZANU-PF, ideally with MDC involvement, to merge the three draft constitutional documents -- the opposition National Constitutional Assembly (NCA) draft, the 2002 draft, and the Pretoria draft -- and put the new "merged" constitution to a referendum as soon as possible. This would likely include the creation of a prime ministerial position.

-- South Africa would be willing to accept a one-year postponement of the 2008 presidential elections if the new "merged" constitution is being put to a vote and there are "airtight" guarantees that Mugabe will depart no later than March 2009. They believe they could "sell" this to the international community and regional communities.

-- If there is not constitutional reform, Motlanthe said he did not believe the regional leaders would endorse the "prolongation" of Mugabe's term to 2010.

13. (C) COMMENT: As we have reported previously, South African leaders have become increasingly frustrated by the erratic rule of President Mugabe and want to see him leave power. South Africa's goal remains the same: a smooth, nonviolent transition to new leadership in Zimbabwe (from within ZANU-PF), together with a new constitutional framework. Motlanthe's comments likely reflect the broad thinking of key South African policymakers, but it is unclear whether -- or with how much intensity -- SAG leaders are actually brokering a deal between the ZANU-PF factions or pursuing other elements of Motlanthe's strategy. President Mbeki has been burned repeatedly in Zimbabwe, and he will remain cautious, watching the situation, quietly talking to key ZANU-PF insiders, but not publicly taking on Mugabe. END COMMENT.
BOST